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N.C. Senate is Poised To Endanger School-Aged Children

Raleigh, NC (May 27, 2021) – On May 24, the North Carolina Senate rewrote House Bill 755 to include [language similar to Florida's now-infamous "Don't Say Gay" bill](#) (see page 7, lines 25-26 and page 8, lines 4-9). It has been fast-tracked through committee and is now on the docket for The Senate Committee on Rules and Operations of the Senate to consider on Tuesday, May 31. If it moves to the Senate for a vote and passes, the House only needs to accept the changes for the bill to be on the Governor's desk in early June.

"This legislation puts children's lives at risk," says Rev. Vance Haywood, Senior Pastor at St. John's MCC. "To do this while the nation is still reeling from the Uvalde school shooting is unconscionable."

According to the [Trevor Project](#), young people that feel bad about their gender identity are more likely to develop anxiety, depression and commit suicide – with at least one suicide attempt [every 45 seconds](#) by LGBTQ+ youth in the U.S. today. However, that number can be cut nearly in half if the young person has at least one affirming and accepting adult in their life.

Among trans-youth, for each context (home, school, work, and friends) in which the youngster is able to use their chosen name, researchers have seen a 29 percent decrease in suicidal ideation, a 56 percent reduction in suicidal behavior, according to a study published in [The Journal of Adolescent Health](#).

[Linda Hawkins, Ph.D., MEd, LPC](#), Co-director of the [Gender and Sexuality Development Clinic](#) at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, reports that [a child begins to have an innate sense of their gender identity between ages 3 and 5](#) (prior to entering kindergarten). She advises parents of children who indicate a transgender or gender-expansive identity that acceptance is the best medicine. "When you have a loving, supportive family and caring adults who can help children accept themselves, almost all of these potentially disastrous health outcomes completely wash away."

The [National Center on Parent, Family & Community Engagement](#), part of the Center for the Study of Social Policy, explains the issue further in their [Healthy Gender Development and Young Children: A Guide for Early Childhood Programs and Professionals](#). "Children need a safe and nurturing environment to explore gender and gender expression. It's important for all children to feel good about who they are and what they can do." The report advised educators

that to help children expand their possibilities—academically, artistically, and emotionally teachers should use books that celebrate diversity and a variety of choices so that children can see that there are many ways to be a child or an adult. Schools should also display images around the room that show people in a wide variety of roles to inspire children to be who they want to be; offer a wide range of toys, books, and games that expose children to diverse gender roles; and provide dramatic play props that give children the freedom to explore and develop their own sense of gender and gender roles.

"Even more concerning than the 'Don't Say Gay' aspect of the bill is the forced outing of trans, non-binary and gender-nonconforming youth," adds Haywood. "If a child has not felt comfortable telling their parents of their pronouns and preferred name, it is most likely because they fear physical, psychological, and emotional abuse at home. Forcing teachers to out the child to the parents is the equivalent of state-sponsored child abuse."

According to [Youth.Gov](#), LGBTQ+ young adults are more than twice as likely to experience homelessness than their non-LGBTQ peers. A study of more than 35 [runaway and homeless](#) providers throughout the United States identified four top causes for homelessness among LGBTQ+ youth: (1) [family](#) rejection resulting from sexual orientation or gender identity; (2) physical, emotional, or sexual abuse; (3) [aging out](#) of the [foster care system](#); and (4) [financial](#) and emotional neglect. Another study that interviewed LGBTQ+ youth who experienced homelessness found that the path to homelessness was "described as a gradual escalation of the parent-child conflict over time, or a growing sense of rejection in the home..."

Haywood closes by stating, "Nothing in HB755 as the Senate has rewritten it aligns with the teaching of Jesus - to love one another, care for one another, and protect one another. It is not the unconditional love Christians are called to embody."

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